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Evaluation

Report on the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2015

Summary

The report provides information on the performance of the evaluation function at corporate and decentralized levels, as well as the contribution of UN-Women to the United Nations system-wide coordination and national capacity development for gender-responsive evaluation. In addition, the report presents the 2016 programme of work and budget for the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO).

The Executive Board may wish to: (a) take note of this report and the programme of work and budget for 2016 of the IEO; (b) welcome the efforts made by UN-Women and the progress achieved in systematic strengthening of the evaluation function, in leading system-wide gender evaluation efforts, and in fostering innovative partnerships for national evaluation capacity development; (c) request UN-Women to further strengthen the coverage of evaluations, the implementation rate of planned evaluations, and submission of management responses; (d) request the IEO to continue leading United Nations system-wide gender-responsive evaluation efforts and innovative partnerships for national evaluation capacity development; and (e) request UN-Women to carry out a review of the evaluation policy in three to five years.

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I. Evaluation for sustainable development

1. The year 2015 has seen important progress in the recognition of gender equality and women's empowerment as being central to sustainable development. The inclusion of gender equality in the 2030 agenda for sustainable development as a stand-alone goal and integrated across all other goals elevates the strategic importance of gender-responsive evaluations.

2. The United Nations General Assembly underlined the importance of evaluation within the transformative 2030 agenda, calling for a) a review and follow-up mechanisms to be informed by country-led evaluations, and b) capacity-building support for developing countries, including the strengthening of national data systems and evaluation programmes.[1] Gender-responsive evaluation principles, including national ownership, the need for disaggregated data, and inclusive multi-stakeholders processes, were highlighted. This is why the evaluation function of UN-Women is guided by the 2030 Agenda, and includes support for the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and national evaluation capacity development.

3. UNEG joined EvalPartners, the global evaluation partnership jointly led by UN-Women and the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE), in celebrating 2015 as the International Year of Evaluation. Numerous online consultative processes and a series of 90 events around the world culminated in the first ever global evaluation week held in a national parliament, where ministers, about 100 parliamentarians and the global evaluation community identified the key future priorities to ensure evaluation will be "fit for purpose" in the context of the 2030 agenda, and with the vision of promoting gender-responsive evaluations.

4. Thanks to its strong evaluation function, as assessed by the review of the evaluation policy presented at the informal Board meeting in March 2016 and its distinct regional level presence, the UN-Women Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) is strategically positioned to work with partners in the United Nations system and beyond to actively contribute to strengthening national capacities for evaluating localized SDGs.

II. The evaluation function at UN-Women

5. The strategic goal of the evaluation function is to enhance the ability of UN-Women to achieve normative, operational and coordination results on gender equality. To accomplish this goal, the IEO manages corporate evaluations, supports decentralized evaluation systems, leads the United Nations system on gender-responsive evaluation, and fosters national capacities for gender-responsive evaluation.

6. The Evaluation Strategic Plan 2014-2017 sets out the implementation framework for the evaluation policy, while the Corporate Evaluation Plan provides a time-bound and costed plan of corporate evaluations to be implemented in compliance with the evaluation policy. The UN-Women Programme and Operations Manual and the Monitoring, Research and Evaluation Plans guide the strategic planning, management, quality and use of decentralized evaluations.

[1] http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=a/res/69/237&referer=/english/&Lang=E.

7. The Global Evaluation Advisory Committee (GEAC) continued to serve as a corporate advisory mechanism to the Executive Director and the IEO on the independence and quality of the evaluation function. In December 2015, the Committee met for its annual meeting and expressed appreciation to UN-Women for demonstrating strong leadership in evaluation, and the IEO for its "outstanding standards and performance".[2] The Committee issued five recommendations to UN-Women mainly on enhancing the use and benefit of evaluation, focusing on the transformative nature of gender-responsive evaluation and intensifying efforts towards engendering the SDGs through strategic partnerships. UN-Women agreed with the recommendations and will implement them.

Review of the evaluation policy of UN-Women

8. The Executive Board requested (Decision 2015/1) the IEO and the Office of the Executive Director to lead a review of the UN-Women evaluation policy (UNW/2012/12) to be considered by the Board in the framework of this report.[3]

9. The review, conducted from March 2015 to March 2016, was based on (a) the findings of three external assessments conducted in 2014 and two conducted in 2015,[4] (b) the GEAC report to the 2015 First Annual session of the Executive Board and related Board decision, (c) consultations with UN-Women senior management and the Executive Board.[5] All the above assessed UN-Women's evaluation function positively, leading to the conclusion that UN-Women's evaluation policy is relevant and effective in its third year of implementation and provides a strong normative framework for a robust evaluation function. Based on this, and in line with general practice in the United Nations system, the review recommended the evaluation policy be reviewed in three to five years' time.[6]

A. Performance of the evaluation function

10. The global evaluation oversight system was developed to provide greater oversight and transparency of the performance of the evaluation function within UN-Women. In addition to the existing eight indicators, one new performance indicator (on the use of evaluation) was introduced in 2015. Quarterly progress on the key performance indicators were shared with senior management at headquarters and field offices, highlighting areas of strength and issues that required attention.

[2] Global Evaluation Advisory Committee letter to Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director, UN-Women, December 2015.

[3] Decision 2015/1 on the Report of the Global Evaluation Advisory Committee on the external assessments of the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

[4] UNEG Professional Peer Review of the UN-Women Evaluation Function; JIU Analysis of the evaluation function in the UN System; the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) assessment of UN-Women; OIOS assessments of evaluation function; and MAR assessment.

[5] Informal Board meeting in March 2016.

[6] Review of UN-Women Evaluation Policy, March 2016.

Table 1
Trends in key performance indicators, 2013-2015

Key performance indicator	*Description*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*Target (by 2017)*	*Overall assessment*
			(percentage)			
Financial resources invested in evaluation function	Evaluation expenditure over total UN-Women expenditure	1.3	2.2	2.0	3.0	On track/needs reviewing
Human resources for monitoring and evaluation	Offices that appointed monitoring and evaluation focal point or officer	83.0	98.0	100.0	100.0	Achieved
Evaluation coverage	Offices that conducted at least one evaluation since 2011	67.0	68.0	71.0	100.0	Needs improvement
Evaluation implementation rate	Percentage of evaluations being implemented[a]	83.0	71.0	76.0	95.0	Needs improvement
Quality of evaluations	Percentage of evaluations rated "satisfactory and above"	85.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	Achieved
Evaluation reports posted on GATE	Percentage of completed evaluation reports posted on GATE	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	Achieved
Management response submission to GATE	Percentage of completed evaluation reports submitted with management response to GATE	85.0	86.0	86.0	100.0	Needs improvement
Implementation of management response	Percentage of management response key actions being implemented	88.0	83.0	85.0	90.0	On track
Use of evaluations	Percentage of offices that reported using evaluation	–	71.0	75.0	90.0	On track

Source: Global evaluation oversight system.
Abbreviation: GATE, Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use system.
[a] Refers to the number of evaluations completed and initiated against the total number of evaluations planned in 2015.

11. Taken together, the overall results shows a positive and sustained progress on six out of nine key performance indicators. While slight improvement on evaluation implementation and coverage of evaluations was witnessed compared to the previous year, additional efforts are needed to ensure adequate programme coverage and evaluative evidence to better inform decision-making, and contribute to organizational accountability and learning. Below is a detailed analysis of each key performance indicator.

Key performance indicator 1: financial resources

12. The evaluation policy states that "The recommended minimum level of investment in evaluation is 3 per cent of the total plan/programme budget". While it is likely that resources invested in evaluation will fluctuate yearly, this key performance indicator provides an overall indication of the trend over the years of financial commitment of UN-Women to the evaluation function (see table 2).

Table 2
Evaluation function expenditure, 2013-2015
(United States dollars)

	2013	*2014*	*2015*
Total UN-Women expenditure	269 660 584	270 537 900	315 101 084
Total expenditure in evaluation	3 576 396	5 917 163	6 272 545
IEO	2 123 750	4 499 942	4 621 818
Decentralized evaluations	1 226 729	1 417 221	1 650 727
Total expenditure in evaluation (percentage)	**1.3**	**2.2**	**2.0**

Source: The expenditure figure for the IEO was generated from ATLAS by the Division of Management and Administration (DMA), and figures for decentralized evaluations were calculated on the basis of official figures by DMA and inputs from field offices.

13. In 2015, 2 per cent of the UN-Women budget was spent on evaluation. While this represents a slight decrease from 2.2 per cent in 2014, in real terms UN-Women experienced a $355,382 increase in spending on evaluation compared to 2014. In addition to $1.6 million spent in decentralized evaluations directly by field offices, $1.4 million (30 per cent) of IEO budget was spent to support the decentralized evaluation function — mainly through the regional evaluation specialists who are IEO staff deployed in the regions. This brings the total expenditures for decentralized evaluation to $3 million. For the reporting period, IEO mobilized 14 per cent of its budget from donor contribution. The financial implementation rate by IEO was 97.7 per cent.[7]

14. While the methodology used to calculate investments in the evaluation function has served the purpose of tracking UN-Women trends in resource allocation to the evaluation function, UN-Women recognizes that the current methodology has limitations in terms of reliability to correctly capture expenditures at decentralized level. UN-Women also recognizes the need to better align the methodology with the evaluation policy, which refers to "programme budget". UN-Women understands "programme budget" as the total amount of "programme activities", as defined by the harmonized cost classification and funding framework approved by the UN-Women Executive Board (2013/2) and used in the UN-Women Integrated Budget document. Per this framework, programme activities relate to projects and programmes funded from regular programme and other resources only, excluding the other cost classification categories funded from the Institutional Budget (development effectiveness, United Nations Coordination, and management) as well as funding received from the regular budget (assessed contribution) in support of normative work.

15. The percentage of total expenditure in evaluation represents 2.8 per cent of the total programme budget, as per the above definition of "programme budget".

[7] UN-Women Executive Dashboard.

Table 3
Expenditure in evaluation function, 2015, against "programme budget", by the harmonized cost classification and funding framework

Total Evaluation Expenditure	6.3 million
Total Programme Expenditure	225.3 million
Evaluation %	2.8%

Source: DMA.

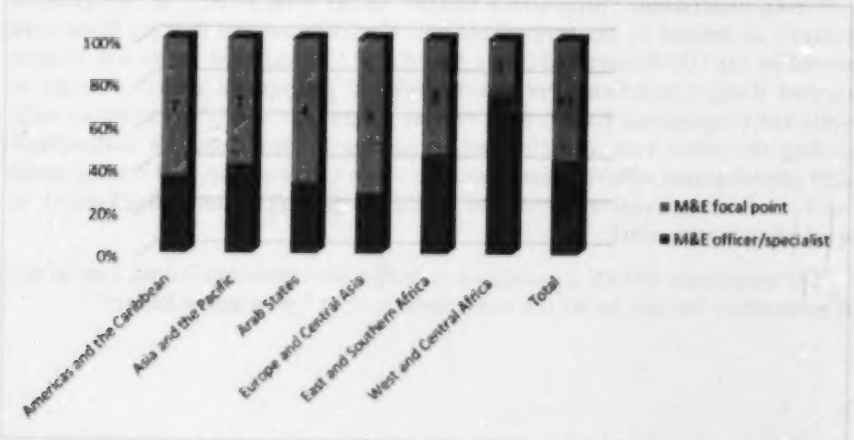
16. With the aim of improving the reliability of reporting on investment in the evaluation function, UN-Women is committed to reviewing the methodology and report on it within the 2016 Annual Report of the Evaluation Function.

Key performance indicator 2: human resources

17. The staffing profile in the IEO is largely unchanged from the previous year. In 2015, IEO had 16 staff members: 10 based at headquarters, 6 regional evaluation specialists in each regional office and one Junior Professional Officer in the East and Southern Africa region. Regional evaluation specialists are IEO staff deployed in regional offices reporting directly to the Director of the IEO.

18. Over the past year, the number of dedicated monitoring and evaluation officers across UN-Women offices increased from 29 per cent to 44 per cent. All the remaining offices had appointed a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) focal point. Overall, the staffing trends on M&E over the past three years are positive in all regions. In particular, about 50 per cent or more offices in Africa region had at least one dedicated M&E staff member. In light of the organization's aspiration to make evaluations more relevant and credible, investment should also be made to ensure that increasing M&E human resources translates into increased coverage and implementation of evaluations.

Figure 1
Human resources for monitoring and evaluation officers/focal points by region



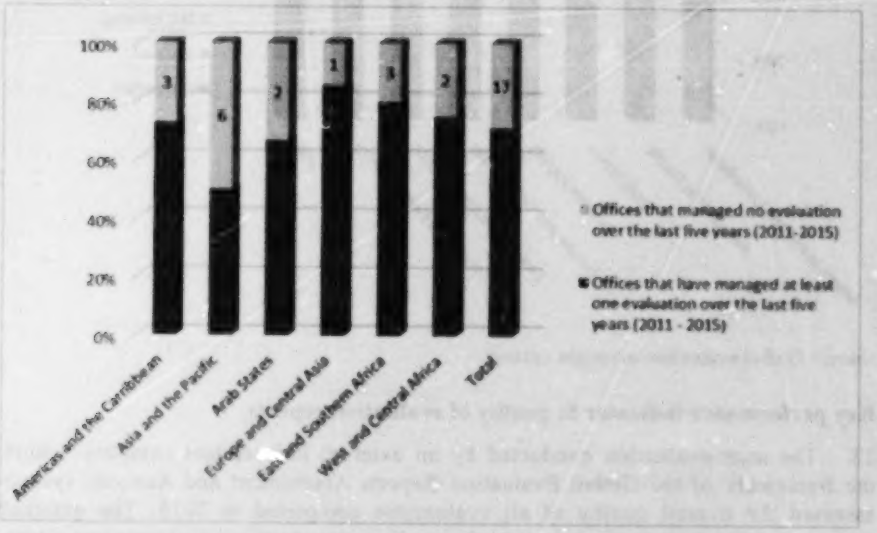
Source: Global evaluation oversight system.
Abbreviation: M&E, Monitoring and Evaluation.

Key performance indicator 3: coverage and types of evaluations

19. 71 per cent of country offices conducted at least one evaluation during the period 2011-2015. Europe and Central Asia (86 per cent) had the highest percentage of countries with at least one completed evaluation, while the Asia and the Pacific region had the lowest percentage (50 per cent).

20. Notwithstanding the short timespan since the regional architecture and decentralized institutional arrangements were rolled out, particularly in some regions and country offices, the progress attained in evaluation coverage could generally be considered positive. However, increased oversight and commitment is required in the future to ensure compliance with evaluation policy requirements.

Figure 2
Evaluation coverage by region, 2011-2015



Source: Global evaluation oversight system.

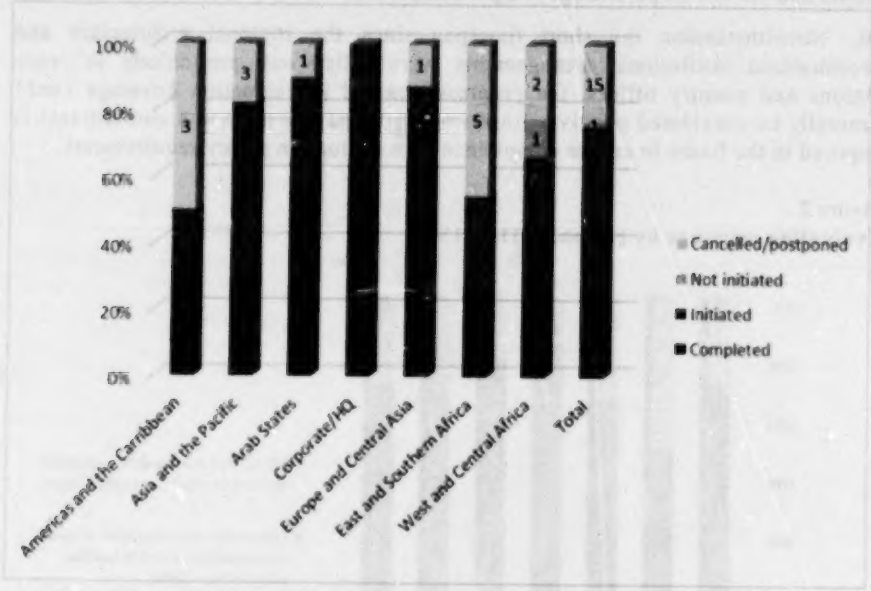
21. All thematic areas were well covered by the body of evaluations, with an even spread of quality. In 2015, three country portfolio evaluations were conducted (in El Salvador, Mozambique and Kazakhstan). The roll-out of the country portfolio evaluation approach will allow most programmes or strategic notes to be evaluated during a programme cycle, an important requirement for accountability and strategic decision-making for improved programming.

Key performance indicator 4: implementation rate of planned evaluations

22. Of the 66 evaluations planned by UN-Women in 2015, 76 per cent were being implemented (43 per cent completed and 33 per cent initiated). However, a total of 24 per cent of the evaluations planned were not implemented (1 per cent not initiated and 23 per cent cancelled and/or postponed) (see figure 3). Evaluations were cancelled/postponed and in few cases delayed primarily due to difficulties with sourcing qualified national consultants, insufficient funding, ambitious planning and

in a few cases crisis situations. This points towards the need to pay more attention at decentralized level to ensure good quality evaluation planning and implementation.

Figure 3
Evaluation implementation rate, 2015

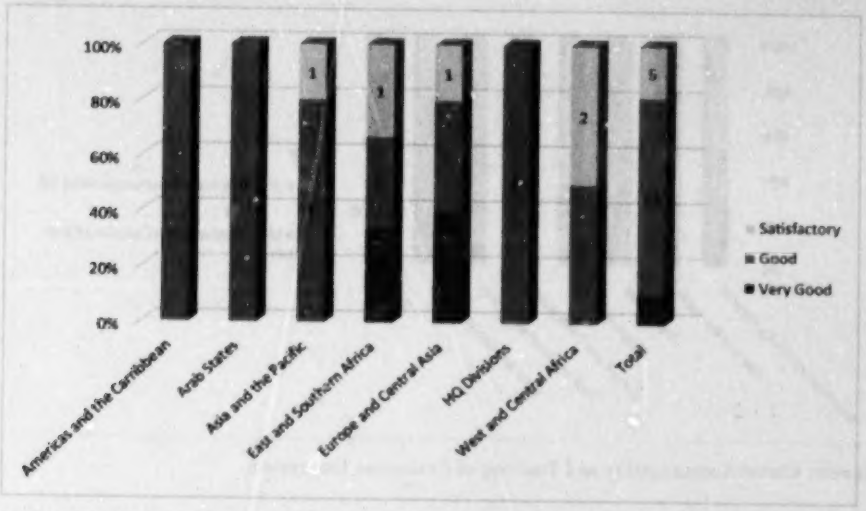


Source: Global evaluation oversight system.

Key performance indicator 5: quality of evaluation reports

23. The meta-evaluation conducted by an external independent company within the framework of the Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis system assessed the overall quality of all evaluations completed in 2015. The external assessment shows an improvement in the quality of evaluations over previous years. The percentage of evaluations judged to be "good" and "very good" reached 81 per cent in 2015. This represented a 10 per cent increase from the previous year. The remaining 19 per cent of reports were rated as "satisfactory".

Figure 4
Quality of evaluations, 2015



Source: Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis system.
Abbreviations: HQ, headquarters.

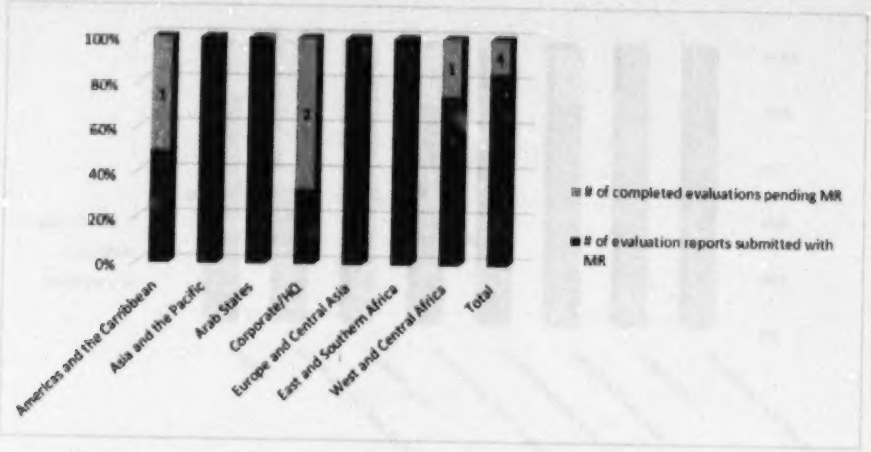
Key performance indicator 6: submission rate of completed evaluation reports to the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use system

24. Similar to the pattern observed in previous years, 100 per cent of completed evaluations were uploaded and made publicly available through the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use (GATE) system.

Key performance indicator 7: management response submission to the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use system

25. Of 28 evaluations completed during the reporting period, 86 per cent have a management response. To improve compliance at the corporate level, a performance indicator on management response has been included in the evaluation dashboard while status on management response was communicated and followed-up with country offices within the framework of the Country Office Assessment Tool (COAT). These actions are expected to further improve compliance in uploading completed responses to the online tracking system and ensuring that the management responses are implemented.

Figure 5
Management responses submission, 2015

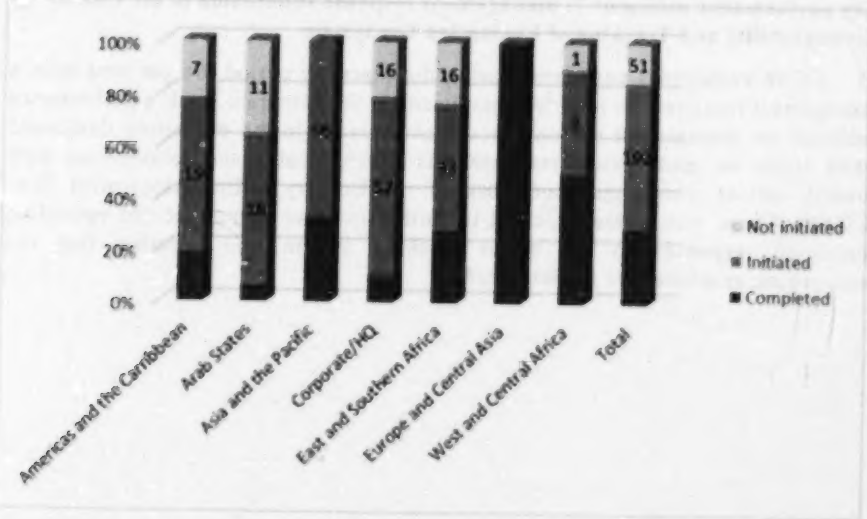


Source: Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use system.

Key performance indicator 8: implementation of management response

26. As per the provision of the evaluation policy, the IEO continued its efforts to track implementation of evaluation recommendations. Of the 343 actions agreed to in management responses, 85 per cent were being implemented: 29 per cent completed and 56 per cent were ongoing. However, the remaining 15 per cent had not been initiated including those that had passed their due dates (see figure 5).

Figure 6
Implementation of evaluation management response/key actions, 2014

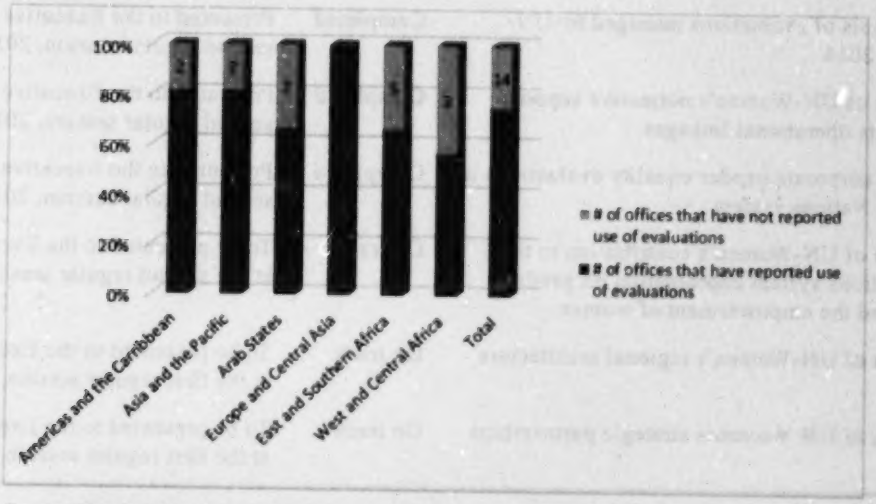


Source: Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use system.

Key performance indicator 9: use of evaluations

27. Beyond monitoring and tracking of formal management responses, IEO started tracking information on utilization of evaluations. In 2015, 75 per cent of field offices reported instances where they had used evidence and lessons from recent evaluations (decentralized and corporate) to inform their interventions and programming.

Figure 7
Use of evaluations, 2015



Source: Results Management System.

B. Corporate evaluations

28. In 2015, the IEO continued its ongoing efforts to ensure quality and timely delivery of corporate evaluations. The IEO presented to the Executive Board the reports of five evaluative studies including two corporate evaluations on (a) the contribution of UN-Women to women's economic empowerment and (b) UN-Women normative support work and its operational linkage.

29. By the end of 2015, the implementation rate for corporate evaluations in 2015-2016 was 100 per cent. As presented in table 3, of eight planned evaluative studies, five were "completed" and three were "on track".

Table 4
Implementation status of planned corporate evaluations, 2015-2016

	Title of evaluative study	*Status*	*Additional information*
1.	Review of policies and practices to promote gender-responsive evaluation systems	Completed	Presented to the Executive Board at annual session, 2015
2.	Evaluation of the contribution of UN-Women to women's economic empowerment	Completed	Presented to the Executive Board at annual session, 2015
3.	Meta-analysis of evaluations managed by UN-Women in 2014	Completed	Presented to the Executive Board at the second regular session, 2015
4.	Evaluation of UN-Women's normative support work and its operational linkages	Completed	Presented to the Executive Board at the second regular session, 2015
5.	Review of corporate gender equality evaluations in the United Nations system	Completed	Presented to the Executive Board at the second regular session, 2015
6.	Evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to the United Nations system coordination on gender equality and the empowerment of women	On track	To be presented to the Executive Board at the second regular session, 2016
7.	Evaluation of UN-Women's regional architecture	On track	To be presented to the Executive Board at the first regular session, 2017
8.	Evaluation of UN-Women's strategic partnerships	On track	To be presented to the Executive Board at the first regular session, 2017

Use of corporate evaluation to foster change

30. Since 2015, IEO is reporting to the Executive Board not only the implementation rate of management responses of corporate evaluations, but most importantly the corporate evaluations contribution to changes in UN-Women policies, strategies and practices.

31. Since the evaluation of UN-Women's work in peace and security and humanitarian response was presented to the Executive Board (UNW/2014/CRP.2) in 2014, progress has been made across the recommendations areas. The evaluation recommended the continued scale up of proactive intergovernmental engagement and inter-agency coordination. UN-Women led the United Nations system's efforts and supported Member States in the commemoration of the 15th anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325. This culminated in a High-Level Review in the Security Council and the adoption of Security Council resolution 2242 (2015) which established the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security. As part of the recommendation to invest in knowledge production, UN-Women acted as the Secretariat for the Global Study on Resolution 1325, which consolidated the knowledge and lessons learned from the past 15 years of the implementation of the resolution.

32. Following the evaluation's recommendation on strengthening UN-Women's future work on humanitarian action, UN-Women has developed its capacity and output in addressing its mandate on humanitarian action. UN-Women has seconded

a Senior Gender Adviser to the World Humanitarian Summit to ensure that gender issues are placed high on the agenda of stakeholders. UN-Women's Humanitarian Strategy was finalized and presented to the Executive Board in June 2014, offering the corporate framework for engaging in humanitarian action that is now being taken forward by UN-Women staff in contexts such as Iraq, South Sudan, Yemen and Nepal.

33. In addition, UN-Women has contributed to the development of a humanitarian policy (e.g. resolution 58/2, Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Natural Disasters), undertaken research on the Effect of Gender Equality Programming on Humanitarian Outcomes, led a substantial review of the IASC's 2008 Gender in Humanitarian Action policy and entered into a formal partnership with OCHA to develop gender in humanitarian action capacity in a number of high-level humanitarian contexts.

34. In relation to the recommendation to increase programmatic capacity in fragile settings, UN-Women has recruited women in the region, and peace and security and humanitarian action advisers in all regional offices. The new Flagship Programme Initiative has articulated theories of change for women, peace and security, disaster risk reduction and humanitarian response and recovery. UN-Women country offices are now utilizing these theories of change to improve strategic planning and delivery of results in fragile states and post-conflict contexts.

35. In response to the recommendation to deepen engagement with Member States and regional bodies, UN-Women has been supporting the Peacebuilding Commission to develop a gender strategy, the first phase of which was adopted in December 2015. Partnerships on women, peace and security with inter alia the African Union, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Arab League and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development have been strengthened through technical assistance and capacity support.

C. Decentralized evaluation system

36. About 90 per cent of UN-Women evaluations are managed by field offices, reflecting the decentralized nature of the organization. This ensures that the evaluation function generates contextually relevant evidence which is most likely to be used by policymakers to inform national policies for gender equality. However, it also poses a challenge to ensure evaluations at the country level meet internationally agreed evaluation standards, such as the ones endorsed by UNEG.

37. In response to this, UN-Women has been implementing a systemic approach to enhancing the decentralized evaluation function, in which, IEO, the Programme Division and regional offices are working jointly to strengthen a wide range of areas such as strategic planning of evaluations; the credibility and quality of evaluations; use of evaluations and management responses; and internal evaluation capacity.

Systems to improve the quality, credibility and use of decentralized evaluations

38. Regional evaluation strategies have been rolled out and implemented in all regions to improve the culture of evaluation. A quarterly regional analysis of the global evaluation oversight system dashboard, which provides country-specific breakdowns on evaluation performance indicators, was undertaken and the results

communicated to offices. To enhance the culture of evaluation throughout the organization, most regions discussed the strategic positioning and contribution of the evaluation function at high-level regional meetings.

39. The year 2015 also saw the roll-out of the decentralized evaluation quality assurance process. This new set of standards requires offices to adhere to certain evaluation standards including increased engagement of the regional evaluation specialists throughout the evaluation processes. The rigorous application of standards and oversight is expected to further improve the quality and credibility of decentralized evaluations in 2016 and beyond.

40. The IEO also carried out a wide range of activities that are intended to support better decentralized evaluation. All decentralized evaluations are quality-assured through the Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis system and publicly made available on the GATE system along with their management responses. In 2015, the IEO produced an independent assessment of the quality of all evaluation reports completed in 2014 and provided individual feedback to 18 offices on ways to improve the quality and usefulness of future evaluations.

41. A meta-analysis of all completed corporate and decentralized evaluations in 2014 was prepared and presented to the Executive Board in 2015. The analysis complemented the efforts of UN-Women to promote knowledge generation and continuous learning from evaluations. A series of evaluation knowledge management products and region specific meta-analyses were produced and communicated to offices in East and Southern Africa and American and the Caribbean regions. To support management accountability and transparency in evaluation, the IEO maintained the GATE system.

Strategic planning of evaluations

42. Decentralized evaluation plans continued to be an integral component of the country and regional planning and approval processes. In 2015, eight offices developed monitoring, evaluation and research plan while several offices revised their existing plans in line with the priorities of their strategic notes/annual work plans. As part of the oversight of the evaluation function, regional evaluation specialists provided feedback and assistance in prioritizing major evaluations. While this is a positive development, increased oversight is required to ensure the relevance and implementation of the evaluation plans.

43. Flaws in the design of results frameworks often linked to over ambitious objectives, absence of or unclear theories of change, and lack of concrete baselines are recurrent weaknesses in most corporate and decentralized evaluations. This militates against the ability of evaluations to sufficiently capture results, particularly at the outcome level. Although it is too early to conclusively judge the impact of new developments, the roll-out and progress made on the Results Management System by Programme Division across the organization has created an opportunity to address more systematically the challenges of availability, quality of data and evidence-based monitoring across UN-Women's operations. This development coupled with the launch of flagship programmes with an explicit organization-wide theory of change is expected to have a positive impact in making UN-Women's work more evaluable, facilitate capturing high-level results and enabling more robust evaluations across all regions.

Country portfolio evaluations

44. Acting upon a GEAC recommendation to increase the number and quality of strategic decentralized evaluations, the IEO developed guidance on how to manage country portfolio evaluations (CPE). CPEs aim to provide an in-depth assessment of UN-Women's contribution to development effectiveness with respect to gender equality and the empowerment of women at the country level. This allows the use of limited resources on fewer but strategic and better-quality evaluations. Piloted in three countries in 2015, the CPE programme will be rolled out in 2016.

Internal evaluation capacity development

45. In 2015, in collaboration with the human resource department and the UN-Women Training Centre, IEO launched an evaluation professionalization programme that includes: a newly developed UN-Women evaluation handbook on how to manage gender-responsive evaluation; an online eLearning course and a coaching programme to ensure hands-on learning. The handbook is accessible on the UN-Women Gender Equality Evaluation Portal; upon its launch, traffic to the site reached 652 unique visits on one day.

46. The eLearning course is also publicly accessible, and by December 2015, 515 individuals had enrolled. Of the 80 UN-Women staff enrolled in the course, 41 had received certificates by the end of 2015. The eLearning course modules are presented by staff of the IEO, and "voices from the field" allow for sharing of experiences from UN-Women field staff that have managed evaluation processes. The professionalization initiative provides an incentive for staff to gain knowledge and apply it in managing gender-responsive evaluation, ultimately strengthening the quality and usefulness of evaluation at UN-Women, and building a better evidence base on what works for gender equality and women's empowerment.

47. Regional evaluation specialists made considerable efforts to strengthen evaluation capacities through regional and country-level learning events, use of communities of practice, webinars and provision of technical and oversight support to field offices. The IEO also delivered periodic sessions on evaluation for new staff members across the organization. The provision of consistent technical and quality assurance support by the regional evaluation specialists helped to respond to gaps or problems in respect to terms of reference, evaluation design (methodology), data collection or analysis and reports. This has contributed to the improvement in the quality of evaluation reports at the decentralized level.

48. As part of the recommendations received from the GEAC in late 2014 on the need to improve communication and dissemination of evaluation results, the IEO launched Transform — a Magazine for Gender-Responsive Evaluation. Transform aims to improve accessibility to information on good practices and lessons learned on what works for gender equality as identified by corporate evaluations. In 2015, five issues of Transform were published featuring results from corporate evaluations, meta-analysis and joint reviews. To further intensify these efforts, in 2016 the IEO will develop a communication strategy to advance the use of other channels such as Twitter, synopsis of key evaluation findings, webinars and management briefs as a way of effectively communicating evidence and knowledge stemming from evaluations.

49. In addition, ongoing efforts to enhance knowledge management were maintained. The global online evaluation community of practice continued to serve as a platform for exchange and information-sharing among UN-Women staff. The network reached 207 staff members globally, a 16 per cent increase from the previous year. The UN-Women electronic newsletter continued to keep staff informed on the latest news on evaluation issues. Six newsletters were published during the past year.

Learning from and use of decentralized evaluations

50. Beyond tracking of formal management responses, UN-Women has made concerted efforts to promote learning from and use of decentralized evaluations. The peer review group instituted by the Programme Division remained a strategic platform to ensure systematic integration of lessons from evaluations into new programming.

51. The new results management system made annual reporting on the use of evaluations a mandatory requirement for field offices. As evidenced by data generated from the results management system, three-quarters of field offices reported usage of lessons and findings from evaluations to improve programme design, ensure thematic and geographic focus, scale up successful interventions, forge strategic partnership, and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of projects and programmes.

III. United Nations system-wide coordination of gender-responsive evaluation

52. In 2015, UN-Women intensified its support of system-wide coordination on gender-responsive evaluation mainly through its leadership and support to UNEG, the United Nations System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, independent system-wide evaluation, joint evaluations and knowledge management systems.

A. United Nations Evaluation Groups

53. As Chair of UNEG since March, 2015, UN-Women is leading efforts to strengthen evaluation systems within and beyond the United Nations, as well as advocating for a stronger enabling environment for evaluation. In 2015, UNEG and its members organized a series of evaluation events to celebrate the International Year of Evaluation and to advocate and promote evaluation and evidence-based policymaking at international, regional and national levels. UNEG, with the support of its partners, successfully advocated for the inclusion of evaluation in the follow-up and review mechanism of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. The IEO also supported work across all strategic objectives of the UNEG work plan ensuring the promotion and mainstreaming of gender equality.

54. IEO through its regional evaluation specialists remained an active member in regional United Nations evaluation networks and platforms, with the aim of promoting gender-responsive evaluations, system-wide coherence in evaluation and strengthening field staff skills. In particular, IEO continued to provide leadership to

regional United Nations evaluation groups in the Asia and Pacific, Americas and the Caribbean, and Eastern and Southern Africa regions.

B. United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

55. The Evaluation Performance Indicator of the UN-SWAP on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP EPI) has proven to be a great opportunity for UN-Women to actively engage with United Nations entities on gender-responsive evaluation and provide a mechanism for tracking progress with respect to the integration of gender equality in evaluation practice.

56. In 2015, IEO provided support to United Nations entities by co-leading the UNEG Task force for Gender Equality and Human Rights, which: (a) produced an analysis of the Evaluation Performance Indicator, identifying good practices and lessons learned to inform future actions; (b) shared lessons from integrating gender equality in evaluation, including via webinars; (c) provided bilateral technical guidance, and d) launched a new peer-learning exchange process. In addition, IEO produced a comprehensive analysis on the gender-responsiveness of United Nations evaluation system which was widely disseminated and presented to the Board in 2015.

57. In 2015, of the 64 United Nations entities that submitted a report, 18 (28%) entities reported that the indicator was not applicable to them either because no evaluations were conducted by the entity or they did not have an evaluation function. Of the 46 entities that reported against the indicator, 46 per cent reported "meeting requirements" and 9 per cent "exceeding requirements". However, there are still almost half that are not yet meeting requirements (33 per cent "approaching requirements" and 13 per cent "missing requirements"). Nonetheless, comparisons need to be taken with caution due to the variation in terms of the reporting process for the UN-SWAP EPI.

58. Based on an external independent assessment against the UN-SWAP EPI, in 2015, UN-Women evaluations were rated 6.6 (at the top end of "Approaching Requirements"). The launch of the professionalization initiative, gender evaluation consultant database, CPEs and decentralized evaluation quality assurance process standards are expected to improve results by the end of 2016.

C. Independent system-wide evaluation

59. The independent system-wide evaluation policy established a partnership arrangement between the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and United Nations system entities on conducting system-wide evaluations. In 2015 UN-Women was actively engaged and served as member of the evaluation management groups for two ongoing system-wide evaluations: (a) the evaluation of the United Nations system contribution to strengthening national capacities for statistics, and (b) the meta-evaluation and synthesis of United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) evaluations. This provided a good opportunity to mainstream a gender-responsive evaluation approach in the design of both evaluations.

D. Supporting joint evaluations and UNDAF evaluations

60. In 2015, the IEO finalized two reviews (both presented to the Board) that are of importance for United Nations coordination and these were conducted jointly or in close consultation with partners both within and outside the United Nations system. This was the first time the IEO has conducted such reviews, which were successful in contributing to the collective discussion on lessons learned, good practices, challenges and opportunities around two key strategic areas for United Nations coordination: gender-responsive evaluation and gender mainstreaming.

61. The Review of Policies and Practices to Promote Gender-Responsive Evaluation analysed the extent to which existing evaluation policies and practices (both within the United Nations and national governments) are gender-responsive. The review was conducted in partnership with UNEG, EvalPartners, EvalGender+[8] and the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE). It concluded that there were numerous opportunities for cross collaboration and learning in order to strengthen gender-responsive evaluation systems and practices. Although all stakeholders needed to join partnerships to accelerate progress, UN-Women has a specific role in promoting and supporting gender-responsive evaluation within the United Nations system and among national evaluation systems. The Review of Corporate Gender Equality Evaluations in the United Nations system, conducted in partnership with UNEG, EvalPartners and EvalGender+, analysed 17 corporate gender equality evaluations to identify collective lessons learned, gaps and challenges for strengthening gender mainstreaming within the United Nations system. It provides insights, conclusions and ways forward on each of the UN-SWAP policy areas.

62. Within the framework of regional evaluation groups, UN-Women provided technical and advisory services, such as a review of draft terms of reference and evaluation reports to 12 UNDAF evaluations in Asia and the Pacific, the Americas and the Caribbean and East and Southern Africa.

E. Knowledge management systems

63. In 2015, the gender equality evaluation portal website received 3,574 unique visitors, an increase of 70 per cent from 2014. Providing access to 464 evaluation reports from United Nations entities and beyond, and linking them with the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action. The website provides relevant knowledge on what works and what does not work for gender equality. To facilitate use of the knowledge captured by the report and made available in the database, the IEO produced and widely disseminated a review that extracted lessons learned and good practices in mainstreaming gender in United Nations entities.

64. In response to multiple requests for consultants with both gender and evaluation expertise, in 2015, the internal database of gender and evaluation consultants was enhanced to make it publicly accessible. The Gender Evaluation Consultant Database now provides a link between prospective consultants and institutions in need of evaluators with gender equality expertise. Currently, the

[8] EvalGender+ is a global multi-stakeholder partnership designed to strengthen national capacities for gender-responsive evaluations.

database has 70 consultants and it is searchable by keyword, including region, language, and thematic area of expertise.

IV. Supporting national gender-responsive evaluation capacities

A. Strengthening the enabling environment for evaluation

65. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for an effective, inclusive and transparent M&E framework at the national, regional and global levels to help countries maximize progress in implementing the 2030 agenda and to promote accountability to citizens. The United Nations General Assembly resolution 69/237, "capacity-building for the evaluation of development activities at the country level", reiterates the importance of building national evaluation capacity.

66. These global overarching frameworks, coupled with the declaration of 2015 as an International Year of Evaluation and its subsequent commemoration in a series of 90 events across the world, have spurred a global movement towards strengthening an enabling environment for evaluation. The confluence of these events culminated in the celebration of a historic global evaluation forum in the parliament of Nepal and the adoption of the Global Evaluation Agenda 2016-2020. In partnership with EvalPartners, UNEG and other actors, UN-Women provided leadership including by continuing to co-lead EvalPartners, and actively advocated for integration of gender perspectives in the global evaluation agenda and national evaluation systems.

B. Strengthening institutional capacities for the demand, management and use of evaluations

67. Within the framework of EvalPartners, UN-Women continued its strategic partnership with various partners and evaluation associations to reinforce nationally owned and driven evaluation aimed at achieving greater gender equality. In this framework, several efforts were made to increase the engagement of parliamentarians in the demand for and use of evaluation in Arab States, and the Asia Pacific, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean regions. In addition, EvalPartners through its peer-to-peer programme: facilitated the sharing of good practices across the global evaluation community; organized and facilitated country, regional and global conferences; and effectively used new technologies including social media, webinars and communities of practice to foster learning and knowledge exchange on development evaluation.

68. At the regional level, a training curriculum for policy and decision makers on gender-responsive national evaluation capacity was developed by the UN-Women Eastern and Southern Africa regional office while the UN-Women regional office in Asia and the Pacific produced a series of evaluation publications on gender and evaluation. The Latin America and the Caribbean regional office supported the Justice Ministry of Ecuador to build the M&E system of the National Plan to Eradicate Violence against Women and Girls and prepared training material and technical assistance guidance for possible emulation by other countries in the region. In Arab States, UN-Women conducted a pre-conference workshop on designing and managing gender-responsive evaluation during the MENA Evaluators Network General Assembly.

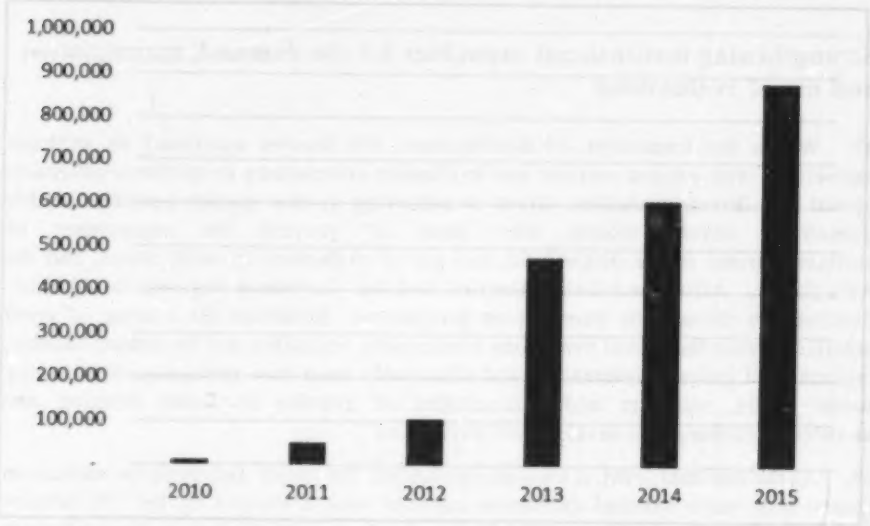
C. Strengthening individual capacities of evaluators to conduct credible and useful gender-responsive evaluations

69. The adoption of cost-effective technologies has continued to be a driving force in enhancing the technical capacities of a critical mass of individual evaluators. The EvalPartners web portal, "My M&E" — developed under the IEO leadership — has attracted a cumulative total of 800,706 visitors and 3,129,298 page downloads since its launch in 2010.

70. The massive open online course on development evaluation remained a key magnet for traffic to the portal. The course reached a cumulative total of 27,513 registered participants from 178 countries, a 24 per cent increase from the previous year. The equity focused and gender-responsive evaluation course attracted 2,920 registered participants, standing out as the most favoured course on the web portal.

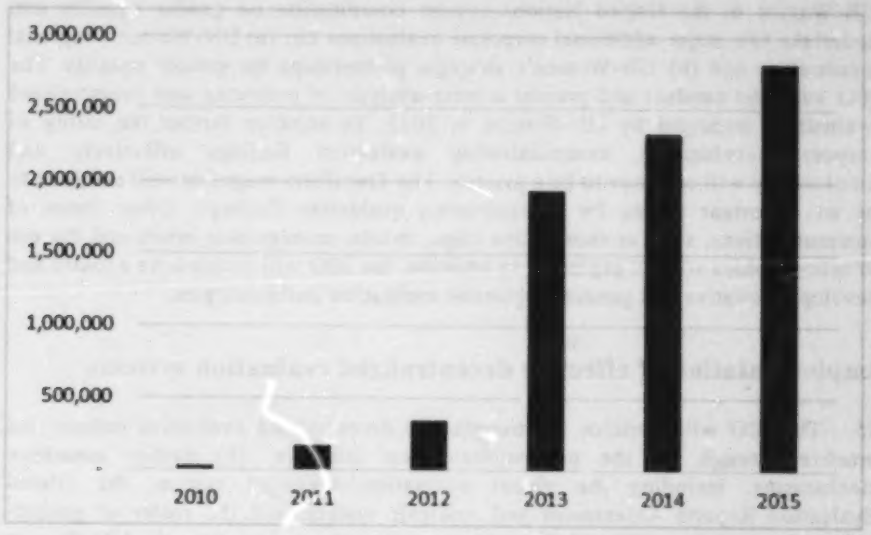
71. Similar to the previous years, a large majority of the participants (69 per cent) were from developing countries while 31 per cent were from developed regions. In terms of organizational affiliation, 30 per cent were from civil society organizations (CSOs), 17 per cent from governments, 19 per cent from United Nations entities, 14 per cent from the private sector, 10 per cent from universities and the remaining 10 per cent from other institutions.

Figure 8
Total cumulative number of visitors to the EvalPartners "MyM&E" platform



Source: MyM&E statistics, December 2015

Figure 9
Total cumulative number of page downloads of the EvalPartners "MyM&E" platform



Source: MyM&E statistics, December 2015.

D. EvalGender+, a new partnership to strengthen the demand, supply and use of gender-responsive evaluations

72. In responding to the SDG principle of "no one left behind", IEO within the umbrella of EvalPartners took the lead for the establishment of EvalGender+. EvalGender+ is a global multi-stakeholder partnership to strengthen national capacities for gender-responsive evaluations. 35 organizations from the United Nations system, multilateral banks, CSO and voluntary organizations for professional evaluation are now members of EvalGender+. EvalGender+ will support global efforts in developing a framework to evaluate the Sustainable Development Goals with a gender lens, and promoting gender-responsive national evaluation systems. EvalGender+ was launched during the Global Evaluation Week at the Parliament of Nepal in November 2015 and is co-led by the UN-Women IEO.

V. The 2016 Independent Evaluation Office programme of work

73. In 2016, the IEO will continue its work, as outlined in the evaluation strategic plan 2014-2017, in the four key results areas outlined below, with a particular focus on contributing to the 2030 agenda.

A. Implementation of effective corporate evaluations

74. In 2016, IEO will present the findings of the evaluation of the contribution by UN-Women to the United Nations system coordination on gender equality and undertake two major additional corporate evaluations on: (a) UN-Women's regional architecture and (b) UN-Women's strategic partnerships for gender equality. The IEO will also conduct and present a meta-analysis of corporate and decentralized evaluations managed by UN-Women in 2015. To enhance further the utility of corporate evaluations, communicating evaluation findings effectively and innovatively will continue to be a priority. The Transform magazine will continue to be an important means for disseminating evaluation findings. Other forms of communications, such as short-video clips, tweets, management briefs and the use of info-graphics will be explored. In addition, the IEO will continue to explore and develop innovative and gender-responsive evaluation methodologies.

B. Implementation of effective decentralized evaluation systems

75. The IEO will continue to strengthen a decentralized evaluation culture and practice through (a) the professionalization initiative, (b) quality assurance mechanisms, including the global evaluation oversight system, the Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis system, and the roster of gender-responsive evaluators. Knowledge management systems, including the UN-Women evaluation community of practice, GATE system, and the Gender Equality Evaluation website, will be maintained to reach a larger audience.

76. In addition to maintaining and strengthening existing decentralized evaluation systems, CPEs will be rolled out organization-wide in 2016. This type of evaluation will provide a strategic assessment of UN-Women's contribution to development effectiveness with respect to gender equality and the empowerment of women at the country level.

C. Promotion of United Nations coordination on gender-responsive evaluation

77. UN-Women will continue to provide leadership and actively participate in UNEG and regional United Nations evaluation groups. The IEO Director will continue chairing UNEG to promote gender-responsive evaluation within United Nations entities and more broadly through partnerships around the SDGs. The IEO will continue to take part in UNEG task forces to ensure mainstreaming of gender equality across inter-agency evaluation work including its support to United Nations entities on the evaluation performance indicator of the UN-SWAP by providing technical guidance, training, and facilitating exchange among United Nations entities. In addition, it will also continue to be an active member of the system-wide evaluation mechanism.

D. Strengthening national evaluation capacities for gender-responsive evaluation systems

78. UN-Women will continue to support national gender-responsive evaluation capacity development through EvalGender+ and EvalPartners. IEO will strategically use its role as Co-Chair of EvalGender+ to advocate for gender-responsive national evaluation systems, will lead the development of a guidance document on the same topic, and will provide technical assistance to selected countries to evaluate localized SDGs with a gender lens.

E. Approved budget for the 2016 Independent Evaluation Office programme of work

79. The total IEO budget for 2016 is $5,336,534. The budget is comprised of three funding categories: institutional budget, core programmable and non-core resources.

80. The institutional budget of $3,165,412 covers the salaries of 11 staff and key activities of the work plan: company contracts for evaluation studies in 2016; office operational costs; support to decentralized evaluation systems; support to United Nations coordination on gender-responsive evaluation; and national evaluation capacity development on gender-responsive evaluation. In addition to the institutional budget, the salaries of five regional evaluation specialists are covered through core resources of $1,100,000.

81. The IEO also received $1,071,122 non-core funds from Switzerland to strengthen the internal evaluation function and to support the integration of a gender lens in the evaluation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Annex I

Evaluations completed in 2015

	Office division	*Title of programme evaluated*	*Rating*
Americas and the Caribbean	El Salvador	Programa Pais de ONU Mujeres en El Salvador	Good
	Ecuador	Clasificador de Orientación del Gasto en Políticas de Igualdad de Genero	Good
Asia and the Pacific	Afghanistan	Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) Special Fund 2008-14	Good
	India, Nepal, Sri Lanka	Empowerment of Widows and their Coalitions	Good
	Nepal	Strengthening Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda	Good
	Nepal	Gender-Responsive Recovery for Sustainable Peace (GRRSP) Project in Kavre, Ramechhap and Sindhuli Districts	Good
	India	Expanding the Scope of Gender-Responsive Budgeting	Satisfactory
Arab States	Jordan	Expanding Syrian Women Refugees' Access to Economic Recovery Opportunities and Meaningful Engagement in Community Life	Good
	Jordan	Achieving E-Quality in the ICT Sector	Good
	Morocco	Appui a une planification locale sensible au genre et intégrant la réduction des risques et désastres climatiques	Good
	Morocco	Accès aux services judiciaires pour des femmes et des enfants victimes de la traite humaine	Good
	Morocco	Observatoire genre et gouvernance démocratique	Good
	Palestine	Socially Responsible Women-Run School Canteens	Good
Europe and Central Asia	Kazakhstan MCO	Multi-Country Office for Central Asia Strategic Note 2014-15	Good
	Georgia	Innovative Action for Gender Equality	Good
	Georgia	Women for Equality, Peace and Development	Very Good
	Georgia	United Nations Joint Programme to Enhance Gender Equality	Satisfactory

	Office division	*Title of programme evaluated*	*Rating*
	Serbia	National Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy for Improving the Position of Women and Promoting Gender Equality	Very Good
Eastern and Southern Africa	Mozambique	Strategic Note of Mozambique 2012-15	Good
	Malawi	Gender and Agriculture Programme	Satisfactory
	Uganda	Joint Programme for Gender Equality	Very Good
Western and Central Africa	Mali	Programme d'assistance aux femmes/filles affectées par le conflit et participation des femmes au processus de consolidation de la paix	Good
	Mali	Appui à l'autonomisation économique des femmes rurales dans le contexte de l'insécurité alimentaire et du changement climatique	Satisfactory
	Sierra Leone	National Action Plan Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008)	Satisfactory
	Cameroon	Plan Stratégique 2012-2013 du Bureau Pays ONU Femmes	Good
Headquarters division	Policy Division	From Communities to Global Security Institutions (FC2GSI) Programme	Good
		Gender and democratic governance in development: Delivering services to women programme	Good

Annex II

Evaluation in funds managed by UN-Women

Fund for Gender Equality

1. Launched in 2009, the Fund for Gender Equality is UN-Women's leading global grant-making mechanism and multi-donor fund dedicated to CSO programming on women's political and economic empowerment. The Fund sustains, supports and strengthens the capacities of CSOs to implement high-impact and multi-stakeholder programmes that translate law and policy commitments into tangible services for women and girls, men and boys around the world, especially in the most excluded and marginalized communities.

2. Evaluation is a stated priority of the Fund to ensure institutional accountability, learning, and communication of results. Given the nature of the Fund, a decentralized approach to evaluation has been developed in which grant holders, under the guidance of the Fund's staff, primarily undertake strategic evaluations using UN-Women and UNEG standards.

3. Five monitoring and reporting specialists deployed in the field provided technical assistance and support to the grantees conducting evaluation processes. In 2015, the Fund developed the capacities of the grantees through technical guidance and support throughout the evaluation processes.

4. In 2015, 17 programme final evaluations were completed with a total budget of $245,300, of which 12 evaluations were co-managed by the Fund's monitoring and reporting specialists. In addition one midterm evaluation, and two programme self-assessments were finalized.

5. In 2015 the Fund launched a global meta-evaluation and meta-analysis exercise to review evaluation reports produced across five regions from 2009 until 2015. The meta-evaluation report assessed the extent to which grantee evaluation reports are in line with UNEG/UN-Women standards and the Global Evaluation Report Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS). Overall 92 per cent of the Fund's reports were found to meet GERAAS standards with 50 per cent rated "good" or "very good". 75 per cent of the evaluations were co-managed by the Fund's monitoring and reporting specialists in partnership with the grantee. The purpose of the meta-analysis was to provide evidence-based information and insights about what works for who in regards to women's political and economic empowerment and the processes and approach of the Fund, by extracting, analysing and communicating evidence from the 22 high-quality evaluation reports covering 24 countries.

The United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women

6. The United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (United Nations Trust Fund) is a multilateral grant-making mechanism established in 1996 by General Assembly resolution 50/166. The United Nations Trust Fund is administered on behalf of the United Nations system by UN-Women. The United Nations Trust Fund currently supports over 100 initiatives in 76 countries and territories, with a total value of over $56 million in grants.

7. In 2015, United Nations Trust Fund grantees planned 20 evaluations, all of which were completed at a cost of $379,642. The United Nations Trust Fund grantees are expected to manage their own external evaluations, with the United Nations Trust Fund Secretariat and UN-Women regional and country offices providing oversight, as well as technical support upon request.

8. In 2015, the United Nations Trust Fund continued to have one staff member as the M&E specialist: to provide technical support to grantees in preparation and management of their project evaluations; manage evaluations at the United Nations Trust Fund Secretariat level; and develop and implement the Fund's overall M&E system, including results aspects of the online Grants Management System (GMS).

9. To enhance the capacities of recently-funded grantees in the areas of evidence-based programming and M&E, the United Nations Trust Fund convened a capacity development workshop for 33 grantee organizations.

10. The United Nations Trust Fund has built up a comprehensive body of knowledge about the kinds of solutions that can have a positive impact on EVAW/G from its evaluations. However, the remaining challenge is how to effectively "harvest" this knowledge and make it accessible to the global community. Hence, the Trust Fund's new Strategic Plan 2015-2020 aims to raise funds for the launch of an online "evidence hub".